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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on two studies in which the effectiveness of two types of student teacher supervisors was rated by cooperating teachers and by student teachers. The first study examined cooperating teachers' and student teachers' perceptions of specific performance aspects of university (college faculty) supervisors and of teaching assistants. The cooperating teachers and student teachers rated differences between the university supervisors and teaching assistants in terms of their helpfulness in developing the skills of student teachers. The performance differences between the two types of supervisors were seen by both the cooperating and the student teachers as minimal. The procedures in the second study were similar to those in the first. The qualifications of elementary teaching experience, elementary certification, and supervisory experience were tested as criteria for supervisor effectiveness. Both the cooperating and the student teachers found significant differences for supervisors with certification and previous supervisory experience; previous classroom experience was not perceived as a key to effective student teacher supervision. Data in the findings seem to raise questions about certain long-held beliefs about qualifications for effective student teacher supervision. Answers to the questionnaire, which gathered the test data from 318 cooperating teachers and 264 student teachers, are displayed in tabular form. (FG)

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Variables Pertaining to the Perceived Effectiveness of University Student Teaching Supervisors*

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Many issues are often raised concerning the qualifications of University supervisors of student teachers in the elementary school. Among them are:

1) Should faculty take precedence over teaching assistants in the selection of supervisors?;

2) How important is it for the University supervisors to have had elementary classroom teaching experience?;

3) How important is it that the University supervisor hold an elementary teaching certificate?; and

4) How important is it that the University supervisor have had previous supervisory experience?

This paper reports two separate studies in which the perceived effectiveness of University supervisors were rated by supervising teachers in the field as well as student teachers. In the first study (Montague and Lamb, 1981), the question relating to the perceived effectiveness of faculty vs. teaching assistants was examined. The second study attempted to examine the questions raised in steps 2-4 listed above.

Study I

The following potential differences in supervisor performance were examined: (1) the frequency of classroom observations, completion of anecdotal records, completion of feedback forms and seminars; (2) ratings of effectiveness in helping student teachers; (3) ratings of the helpfulness of instructional activities the supervisors provided student teachers; (4) ratings of supervisors' understanding of elementary children and the elementary curriculum; (5) the supervisors' availability; and (6) ratings given the supervisors on the overall quality of supervision provided.

The questionnaires were completed during the two semesters of the 1978-1979 academic year. A total of 382 student teachers were supervised by 31 teaching assistants and 12 faculty members and 382 supervising teachers.

Supervisors completed a questionnaire also. Forms were received from 319 (83.2%) of the cooperating teachers and 264 (69.1%) of the student teachers.

Results. Table 1 reports results relative to frequency of performance of assigned supervisory duties. None of the perceived differences were statistically significant ($p = .05$) when analyzed with a t-test.

Insert Table 1 About Here

In order to determine if any statistically significant differences existed between ratings received on each of the remaining items, an average rating for all supervisors, both teaching assistants and faculty members, was calculated. The distribution of teaching assistants above and below this average was then compared with a similar distribution for faculty by use of a chi square (χ^2). The chi square would indicate any significant differences between these distributions. Table 2 is a sample of a 2 x 2 contingency table used for these calculations.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Possible differences between teaching assistants and faculty were then examined in terms of their helpfulness to the student teacher in: (1) developing behavioral management skills; (2) developing planning skills; (3) learning how to choose lesson objectives; (4) learning to communicate more effectively with children; (5) developing an ability to use a variety of teaching methods; (6) learning how to analyze their own teaching behavior; (7) developing evaluation skills; (8) learning how to choose appropriate curriculum materials; and (9) developing a personal teaching philosophy.

Each of these items was rated by student teachers and supervising teachers on a scale from zero (no help) to five (indispensable help). The mean rating ranged from 2.09 to 3.28, with differences between teaching assistants and faculty ranging from .00 to .37 (See Tables 3 and 4). An examination of the ratings by student teachers (See Table 3) indicates no significant differences between teaching assistants and faculty on any of these comparisons. The same can be said of the ratings by supervising teachers (See Table 4).

Student teachers rated each supervisor on the helpfulness of the instructional activities provided by the supervisor. The rating on each item was on a scale from zero (no help) to five (indispensable help). The average ratings on these items (See Table 3) ranged from 2.69 to 3.51 with differences between teaching assistants and faculty ranging from .07 to .12. There are no significant differences between teaching assistants and faculty on student teachers' ratings of the instructional activities provided by supervisors including: (1) an initial orientation to student teaching meeting; (2) classroom observations; (3) feedback conferences; (4) evaluation conferences; and, (5) seminars.

Both student teachers and supervising teachers rated the supervisors on their understanding of elementary children as well as their understanding of the elementary children as well as their understanding of the elementary curriculum. The scale ranged from zero (unsatisfactory) to five (exceptional).. As can be seen on Table 3 and 4 the averages ranged from 3.17 to 3.79 with differences between teaching assistants and faculty ranging from .13 to .30. There were no significant differences between teaching assistants and faculty in how student teachers (Table 3) and supervising teachers (Table 4) perceived the supervisors' understanding of elementary children or the elementary curriculum.

Insert Table 3 About Here

Insert Table 4 About Here

The student teachers rated each supervisor on their degree of availability on a scale from zero (never available) to five (never unavailable). The means of 3.29 for teaching assistants and 3.56 for faculty (See Table 3) were not significantly different.

Finally, the overall quality of the supervision provided by each supervisor was rated by both student teachers and supervising teachers on a scale from zero (unsatisfactory) to four (high degree of excellence). These ratings ranged from 2.65 to 2.85 (See Table 3 and 4). There were no significant differences between faculty and teaching assistants.

Discussion. Universities are criticized for using teaching assistants as supervisors of student teachers by some student teachers and supervising teachers. These individuals seem to feel that a teaching assistant is in some way less qualified or more distracted than would be a faculty member. This study indicates that when student teachers and supervising teachers are asked to evaluate supervisors on specific aspects of the supervisor's performance, differences between the performance of teaching assistants and faculty are minimal. Obviously, differences between supervisors exist. The differences, however, are attributable to factors other than mere title or possession of a doctoral degree.

The experience of supervising student teachers is an invaluable educational aid in the preparation of prospective teacher educators. The

data from this study does not provide support for those who would wish this aspect of graduate work for teacher education be discontinued.

Study II

Study II was a copy of Study I using the categorizations of:

(1) elementary experience vs. no experience

(2) elementary certificate vs. no elementary certificate

(3) supervision experience vs. no supervision experience

Procedures were the same as before with one exception. After a preliminary scan of the data it was decided not to look at the perceived frequency of assigned supervisory duties.

Tables 5 and 6 present summaries for classroom experience vs. no experience.

Insert Table 5 About Here

Insert Table 6 About Here

Tables 7 and 8 present summaries for elementary certification vs. not certified.

Insert Table 7 About Here

Insert Table 8 About Here

Table 9 and 10 present summaries for previous supervision experience vs. no previous supervision experience.

Insert Table 9 About Here

Insert Table 10 About Here

Results. Supervising teachers as well as student teachers perceived no significant difference between those with and those without classroom experience. This was true for all variables rated.

The comparison made between the group with elementary teaching certificates and those without certificates indicate significant differences in perceptions (in favor of those certified) for the following variables when judged by student teachers:

(i) helping the student teacher develop planning skills;

(ii) helping the student teacher develop instructional methods;

(iii) helpfulness of classroom observations

(iv) helpfulness of seminars; and

(v) supervisor's understanding of elementary children.

Supervising teachers' perceptions were not significantly different on any of the variables.

When looking at supervisors with or without previous supervision experience, student teacher's perceived differences between the groups (significant at the .05 level) on the following variables:

(i) helping the student teacher communicate with children

(ii) helping the student teacher develop evaluation skills; and

(iii) helpfulness of seminars.

Supervising teachers perceived significant differences for the following variables:

(i) helping the student teacher choose lesson objectives; and

(ii) helping the student teacher choose curriculum materials.

Discussion. In rating supervisor effectiveness, student teachers perceived more differences in the groups examined than did the supervising teachers. This might be attributed to the student teacher's lack of experience in the student teaching situation, or their more frequent contacts with the university supervisor.

Classroom experience does not seem to be the key to perceived effectiveness by supervising teachers and student teachers. Having certification and previous supervision experience had some effect on the perceptions of supervising teachers and student teachers.

In Summary

The data in the studies seems to raise questions about certain long-held beliefs about qualifications for an effective student teaching supervisor. It is quite commonly believed that faculty will invariably provide supervision, and that elementary classroom teaching experience is essential for successful supervision. This study seems to suggest:

(1) Faculty do not seem to rate better than teaching assistants; and

(2) Elementary classroom teaching experience does not effect how supervising teachers and student teachers perceive the adequacy of university supervisors.

What may be more important to the perceived effectiveness of elementary university supervisors is having had some prior supervision experience and having elementary certification. It appears that experience in supervising student teachers allows a supervisor eventually to improve their skills as

a supervisor. This is not surprising. What is somewhat unexpected is that certification at the elementary level apparently has some effect, but elementary teaching experience has little or no effect. This indicates that the teacher preparation programs are effective in producing some differences that are still manifested in the supervisor's behavior several years after completion of the certificaiton process. Subsequent experience does not seem to produce any differences which manifest themselves in the behavior of supervisors as perceived by others.

Reference

Montague, E.J. and Lamb, C.E. A comparison of the perceived effectiveness of teaching assistants and faculty on student teaching supervisors. Texas Teacher Education Forum, 1981, 6, 10-18.

Table 1

PERCEIVED FREQUENCY
OF ASSIGNED SUPERVISORY DUTIES

(Average number per 14 week semester)

	Teaching Assistants	Faculty
Student Teachers' Perceptions		
Classroom Observations	11.8	12.6
Anecdotal Records Completed	10.9	10.6
Feedback Forms Completed	9.8	9.0
Supervising Teacher's Perceptions		
Classroom Observations	11.2	12.0
Anecdotal Records Completed	9.5	9.8
Supervisors' Self-perceptions		
Classroom Observations	13.3	11.2
Anecdotal Records Completed	11.2	9.8
Feedback Forms Completed	9.9	6.6
Seminars Conducted	13.9	13.4

Table 2

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR'S HELPFULNESS IN
IMPROVING BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS
AS VIEWED BY SUPERVISING TEACHERS

	Above Average	Below Average	Total
Faculty	6 (A)	6 (B)	12
Teaching Assistants	18 (C)	13 (D)	31
TOTAL	24	19	43 (N)

$X^2 = .02$

The chi square (X^2) is calculated using the following formula:

$$X^2 = \frac{N(|AD-BC|-\frac{N}{2})^2}{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)} \qquad df = 1$$

Table 3

SUMMARY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Average Ratings: Teaching Assistants (N_1=31)	Faculty (N_2=12)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills	2.85	2.66	.003
Develop planning skills	2.47	2.82	1.71
Choose lesson objectives	2.11	2.17	.67
Communicate with children	2.64	2.59	.02
Develop instructional methods	2.56	2.83	1.52
Analyze teaching behavior	3.19	3.01	.19
Develop evaluation skills	2.48	2.43	.04
Choose curriculum materials	2.09	2.40	.67
Develop a personal teaching philosophy	2.54	2.50	.06
Helpfulness of Instructional Activities			
Orientation to student teaching	2.80	2.91	.06
Classroom observations	3.43	3.32	.13
Feedback conferences	3.51	3.44	.13
Evaluation conferences	3.36	3.28	.02
Seminars	2.69	2.81	.02
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children	3.66	3.79	.30
Elementary curriculum	3.49	3.77	1.21
Supervisor's Availability	3.29	3.56	1.21
Overall Quality of Supervision provided	2.67	2.85	.86

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 4

SUMMARY OF SUPERVISING TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Average Ratings: Teaching Assistants (N_1 = 31)	Faculty (N_2=12)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills	2.88	2.62	.02
Develop planning skills	2.76	3.10	.06
Choose lesson objectives	2.70	2.99	.30
Communicate with children	2.81	2.77	.11
Develop instructional methods	2.83	2.91	.03
Analyze teaching behavior	3.28	3.27	.001
Develop evaluation skills	2.67	2.94	.62
Choose curriculum materials	2.56	2.76	.54
Develop a personal teaching philosophy	2.79	2.79	.003
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children	3.24	3.54	.24
Elementary curriculum	3.17	3.47	1.24
Overall Quality of Supervision Provided	2.66	2.65	.54

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 5

SUMMARY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Elementary Classroom Experience (N_1=27)	No Experience (N_2=16)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			.826
Develop planning skills			1.509
Choose lesson objectives			.688
Communicate with children			.075
Develop instructional methods			.826
Analyze teaching behavior			.081
Develop evaluation skills			.448
Choose curriculum materials			.781
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			.181
Helpfulness of Instructional Activities			
Orientation to student teaching			.001
Classroom observations			.448
Feedback conferences			1.329
Evaluation conferences			.826
Seminars			.075
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			.826
Elementary curriculum			.448
Supervisor's Availability			1.695
Overall Quality of Supervision provided			.826

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 6

SUMMARY OF SUPERVISING TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Elementary Classroom Experience (N_1=27)	No Experience (N_2=16)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			.001
Develop planning skills			1.695
Choose lesson objectives			.013
Communicate with children			.826
Develop instructional methods			.016
Analyze teaching behavior			.088
Develop evaluation skills			.385
Choose curriculum materials			.016
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			.001
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			1.019
Elementary curriculum			.131
Overall Quality of Supervision Provided			.001

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 7

SUMMARY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Elementary Certified (N_1=28)	Not Certified (N_2=15)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			1.455
Develop planning skills			4.974*
Choose lesson objectives			.094
Communicate with children			.627
Develop instructional methods			6.224*
Analyze teaching behavior			.113
Develop evaluation skills			.565
Choose curriculum materials			1.880
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			2.620
Helpfulness of Instructional Activities			
Orientation to student teaching			3.271
Classroom observations			4.364*
Feedback conferences			2.828
Evaluation conferences			.528
Seminars			8.420*
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			6.098*
Elementary curriculum			.140
Supervisor's Availability			2.620
Overall Quality of Supervision provided			1.455

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 8

SUMMARY OF SUPERVISING TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Elementary Certified (N_1=28)	Not Certified (N_2=15)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			.113
Develop planning skills			2.620
Choose lesson objectives			.627
Communicate with children			.937
Develop instructional methods			.627
Analyze teaching behavior			.032
Develop evaluation skills			1.055
Choose curriculum materials			.627
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			.012
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			.113
Elementary curriculum			2.828
Overall Quality of Supervision Provided			.012

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 9

SUMMARY OF STUDENT TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Supervision Experience (N_1=24)	No Supervision Experience (N_2=19)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			1.195
Develop planning skills			2.915
Choose lesson objectives			.080
Communicate with children			4.873*
Develop instructional methods			3.686
Analyze teaching behavior			1.694
Develop evaluation skills			3.915*
Choose curriculum materials			1.374
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			1.862
Helpfulness of Instructional Activities			
Orientation to student teaching			1.195
Classroom observations			3.686
Feedback conferences			1.694
Evaluation conferences			2.332
Seminars			4.749*
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			.927
Elementary curriculum			.927
Supervisor's Availability			.167
Overall Quality of Supervision provided			1.694

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$

Table 10

SUMMARY OF SUPERVISING TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

Variable:	Supervision Experience (N_1=24)	No Supervision Experience (N_2=19)	X^{2*}
Helping the Student Teacher			
Develop behavioral management skills			3.686
Develop planning skills			1.694
Choose lesson objectives			4.873*
Communicate with children			2.688
Develop instructional methods			.116
Analyze teaching behavior			.385
Develop evaluation skills			3.523
Choose curriculum materials			4.873*
Develop a personal teaching philosophy			1.048
Supervisor's Understanding of			
Elementary children			.826
Elementary curriculum			.043
Overall Quality of Supervision Provided			.905

*X^2 = 3.84 significant at the .05 level

$N_1 + N_2 = N = 43$